

News

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics
PO Box 193766
San Francisco, Calif. 941 19-3766



CONTACT:

Richard J. Holden (415) 975-4373
Amar Mann (415) 975-4929
Fax-On-Demand (415) 975-4567, Document 9660

BLS 05-40

FOR RELEASE:
Tuesday June 28, 2005

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN CALIFORNIA: THIRD QUARTER 2004

**San Luis Obispo leads large counties with 6.9 percent wage increase;
Counties in the San Francisco area are the highest paid**

In the third quarter of 2004, average weekly wages in San Luis Obispo County rose by 6.9 percent over the year, the largest increase among California's 26 large counties with employment of 75,000 or more, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. San Luis Obispo County's gain was also the 12th largest wage increase among the 317 large counties nationwide. Regional Commissioner Richard J. Holden pointed out that all but one of California's large counties experienced wage growth over the year. Santa Cruz County was the exception, with a 1.3-percent drop in average weekly wages, which placed it among the bottom ten nationwide.

The State's top six counties in wages were all located in the San Francisco area; three of these -- Santa Clara County, San Mateo County and San Francisco County -- had wage levels exceeding \$1,000 in the third quarter of 2004. (See table 1.) Santa Clara County's wage, at \$1,308, was the highest in California and ranked second nationwide, following only New York County, N.Y., at \$1,327.

Wage levels

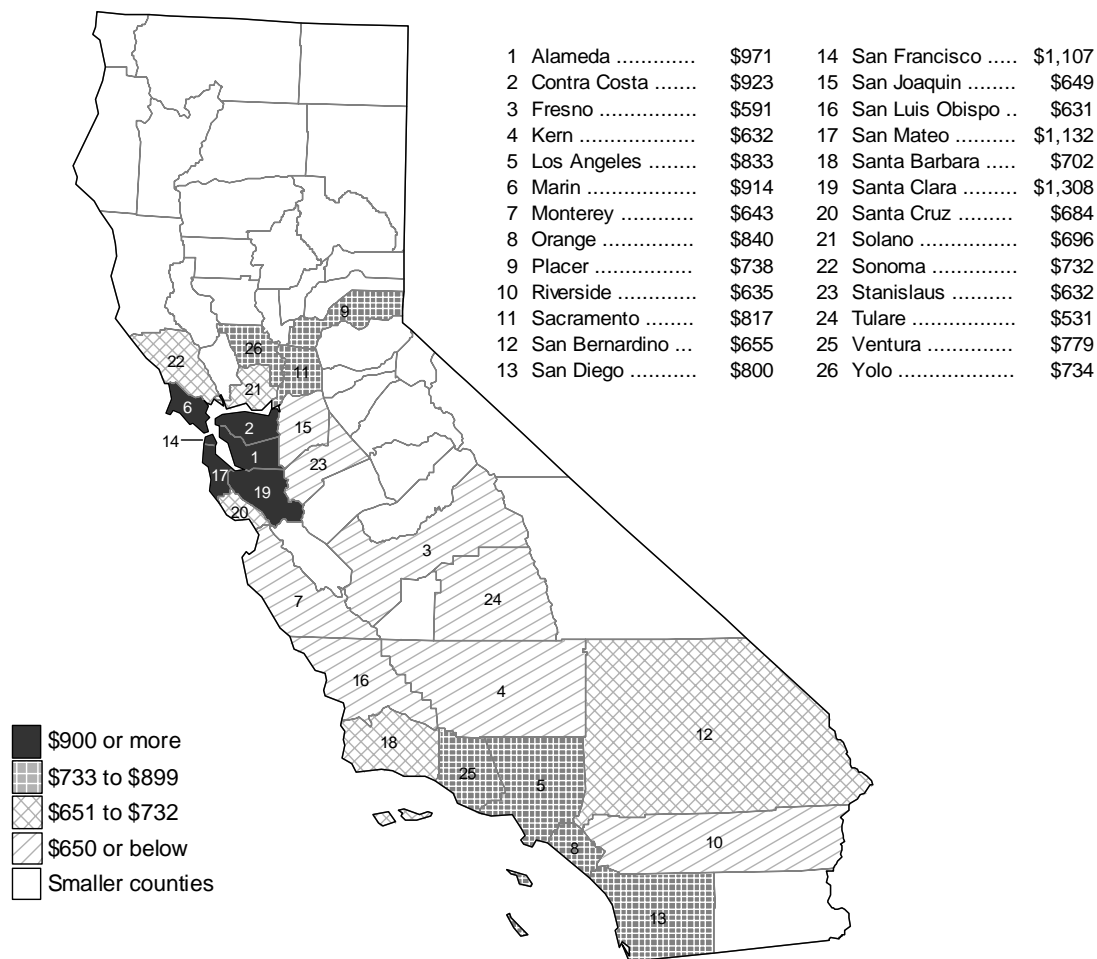
Weekly wages in California averaged \$829 in the third quarter of 2004, 3.9 percent higher than a year ago. While California's wage growth was close to the nation's 4.0-percent increase, the State's wage level was considerably higher than the U.S. average of \$733. California had the fifth highest average weekly wage in the nation, behind Connecticut (\$917), Massachusetts (\$907), New York (\$891), and New Jersey (\$876). (See table 2.)

Among the 26 large counties in California, three ranked among the nation's top ten in wages -- Santa Clara (\$1,308), San Mateo (\$1,132), and San Francisco (\$1,107). Santa Clara's average weekly wage was 78.4 percent above the national average, ranking second among the 317 large counties, while average weekly wages in San Mateo and San Francisco ranked sixth and eighth, respectively. Three other San Francisco area counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, and Marin) placed in the top 30 nationally. The highest ranked county in California outside the San Francisco area was Orange County, which placed 49th nationally and 7th in the State. Overall, half of the 26 large counties in California had wages above the U.S. average. The counties of Tulare and Fresno, which have a high concentration of agricultural employment, recorded the lowest average weekly wages in California (\$531 and \$591,

respectively). Tulare County's average weekly wage ranked seventh lowest in the nation.

Average Weekly Wages in the 26 Largest Counties in California, Third Quarter 2004, Not Seasonally Adjusted

(California wage = \$829; U.S. wage = \$733)



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Among the 317 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,327 in the third quarter of 2004. Santa Clara, Calif., was second, followed by Washington, D.C. (\$1,207), and Arlington, Va. (\$1,196). Three of the ten counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.). Three others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco), while three more were located in or around the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va., and Fairfax, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area. The lowest average weekly wage was

reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$468), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$475), Horry, S.C. (\$487), Webb, Texas (\$496), and Yakima, Wash. (\$500).

Over-the-year wage changes

Eleven of California's 26 large counties recorded wage growth greater than the national increase of 4.0 percent in the third quarter of 2004. San Luis Obispo County's 6.9-percent increase was the largest in the State and ranked 12th in the nation, followed by San Diego County's 5.4-percent gain which ranked second in the State and 44th in the nation. Wage growth was less than 2.0 percent in two counties, Ventura and San Mateo, and declined in Santa Cruz County. Santa Cruz's 1.3-percent drop in the average weekly wage ranked 308th in the nation.

Saint Joseph County, Ind., led the U.S. in average weekly wage growth with an increase of 10.4 percent. Suffolk County, Mass., was second with 9.1-percent growth, followed by the counties of Loudoun, Va. (8.4 percent), Rockingham, N.H. (8.1 percent), and Arlington, Va. (7.7 percent). Seven large counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages, led by Kalamazoo, Mich. (-7.7 percent), Arapahoe, Colo. (-7.3 percent), and Somerset, N.J. (-6.9 percent).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to state and federal unemployment insurance laws (UI) laws. The 8.4 million employer reports cover 130.2 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number is then divided by the number of weeks in the quarter. The over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, Employment and Wages, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2003 is available for sale from the BLS Publications Sales Center, P.O. Box 2145, Chicago, Illinois 60690, telephone 312-353-1880. The bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn03.htm>. Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Covered Employment and Wages Survey, as well as other BLS programs, contact the San Francisco Information Office at 415-975-4350 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. PT.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 800-877-8339.

NOTE

QCEW data the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States and the 26 largest counties in California, third quarter 2004²

Area	Employment	Average weekly wage ³			
	September 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by wage level	Percent change, third quarter 2003-04 ⁴	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁵	130,248.9	\$733	-	4.0	-
California.....	15,106.6	829	-	3.9	-
Alameda.....	674.8	971	14	3.6	172
Contra Costa.....	339.2	923	26	5.2	53
Fresno.....	348.8	591	281	3.5	187
Kern.....	257.7	632	238	5.0	60
Los Angeles.....	4,019.6	833	51	4.9	68
Marin.....	110.3	914	28	4.8	72
Monterey.....	180.2	643	227	4.7	77
Orange.....	1,468.4	840	49	3.3	199
Placer.....	130.9	738	112	3.2	202
Riverside.....	572.4	635	234	5.3	49
Sacramento.....	608.8	817	60	2.4	262
San Bernardino.....	600.7	655	211	4.1	133
San Diego.....	1,268.0	800	68	5.4	44
San Francisco.....	521.9	1,107	8	3.4	194
San Joaquin.....	221.9	649	216	3.5	187
San Luis Obispo.....	101.7	631	243	6.9	12
San Mateo.....	328.7	1,132	6	0.8	301
Santa Barbara.....	180.6	702	147	3.7	163
Santa Clara.....	850.8	1,308	2	3.1	209
Santa Cruz.....	100.3	684	173	-1.3	308
Solano.....	128.1	696	154	2.5	257
Sonoma.....	193.1	732	120	2.7	238
Stanislaus.....	174.9	632	238	3.8	157
Tulare.....	135.9	531	310	5.1	58
Ventura.....	302.2	779	79	1.3	296
Yolo.....	98.6	734	116	5.0	60

¹ Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employee (UCFE) programs.

² Data are preliminary.

³ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁴ Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

⁵ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, third quarter 2004²

Area	Employment	Average weekly wage ³			
	September 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, 2003-04 ⁴	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁵	130,248.9	\$733	-	4.0	-
Alabama.....	1,858.0	629	33	3.6	37
Alaska.....	314.2	755	13	3.4	42
Arizona.....	2,357.6	691	22	4.9	10
Arkansas.....	1,145.7	570	45	5.2	7
California.....	15,106.6	829	6	3.9	32
Colorado.....	2,163.4	752	15	1.1	50
Connecticut.....	1,642.1	917	2	5.4	5
Delaware.....	414.9	769	9	2.1	49
District of Columbia.....	658.3	1,207	1	7.6	1
Florida.....	7,397.2	655	27	4.5	16
Georgia.....	3,837.8	711	19	3.8	35
Hawaii.....	585.6	676	24	4.5	16
Idaho.....	608.1	569	46	4.0	30
Illinois.....	5,747.7	779	8	3.9	32
Indiana.....	2,887.8	655	27	4.5	16
Iowa.....	1,431.8	604	37	4.1	24
Kansas.....	1,304.8	620	34	4.6	13
Kentucky.....	1,742.9	619	35	4.4	19
Louisiana.....	1,861.1	595	41	2.8	47
Maine.....	608.8	603	39	4.3	21
Maryland.....	2,479.5	795	7	4.2	23
Massachusetts.....	3,156.5	907	3	5.5	4
Michigan.....	4,344.5	757	10	3.4	42
Minnesota.....	2,629.9	753	14	3.2	44
Mississippi.....	1,113.8	540	49	3.6	37
Missouri.....	2,656.2	655	27	3.0	46
Montana.....	413.0	525	51	3.6	37
Nebraska.....	887.4	601	40	3.6	37
Nevada.....	1,168.5	703	21	4.1	24
New Hampshire.....	622.6	731	16	6.1	2
New Jersey.....	3,918.8	876	5	2.8	47
New Mexico.....	769.3	588	43	4.1	24
New York.....	8,307.9	891	4	5.3	6
North Carolina.....	3,814.9	654	30	4.1	24
North Dakota.....	327.2	548	48	4.0	30
Ohio.....	5,333.0	685	23	4.1	24
Oklahoma.....	1,435.7	581	44	3.9	32
Oregon.....	1,627.6	676	24	3.7	36
Pennsylvania.....	5,531.4	722	17	4.3	21
Rhode Island.....	484.6	708	20	4.6	13
South Carolina.....	1,799.2	604	37	4.1	24
South Dakota.....	375.5	538	50	4.9	10
Tennessee.....	2,668.6	659	26	4.4	19
Texas.....	9,357.6	719	18	3.6	37
Utah.....	1,084.4	607	36	3.2	44
Vermont.....	302.0	634	32	5.8	3
Virginia.....	3,522.7	757	10	4.6	13
Washington.....	2,749.9	756	12	0.4	51
West Virginia.....	693.1	559	47	5.1	8
Wisconsin.....	2,745.6	653	31	4.8	12
Wyoming.....	253.6	590	42	5.0	9

¹ Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employee (UCFE) programs.

² Data are preliminary.

³ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁴ Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

⁵ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.